comprises a co-fiberized composite material.

3. (original) An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 2, wherein said mineral fibers comprise glass fibers.

4. (original) An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 3, where said organic fibers are formed from a material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene; polyphenylene sulfide; polyethylene terephthalate (PET); polyethylene; poly($\forall$-olefin) copolymers, nylon 6, nylon 66; nylon 46; nylon 12; copolyamides; polycarbonate; copolymers of polycarbonate; polybutylene terephthalate (PBT); polypropylene terephthalate (PPT); polyphenylene ether (PPE); and blends thereof.

5. (currently amended): An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 1, wherein said layer semi-compacted thickness has a maximum thickness of from about 5 mm to about 50 mm.

6. (original) An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 5, wherein said layer has a density of from about 500 grams/m^2 to about 3000 grams/m^2.

7. (original) An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 6, wherein said layer comprises a sheath having a generally U- or V-shape and is adapted to be positioned adjacent to a vehicle pillar.

8. (original) An energy absorbing element as set forth in claim 1, wherein the composite material comprises mineral fibers in an amount from about 10% to about 90% by weight, based

on the total weight of the composite material, and organic fibers in an amount from about 10% to about 90% by weight, based on the total weight of the composite material.

9-12 (canceled without prejudice).

13. (currently amended): A trim panel/sheath combination adapted to be secured to a vehicle pillar comprising:

a polymeric trim panel and;

a sheath formed of composite material having a semi-compacted thickness less than an initial prepared thickness comprising a mixture of mineral fibers and organic fibers.

14. (currently amended): A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 13, wherein said mineral fibers and said organic fibers are entangled as composite material comprises a co-fiberized composite material.

15. (original) A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 14, wherein said mineral fibers comprise glass fibers.

16. (original) A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 15, wherein said organic fibers are formed from a material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene; polyphenylene sulfide; polyethylene terephthalate (PET); polyethylene; poly($\forall$-olefin) copolymers, nylon 6, nylon 66; nylon 46; nylon 12; copolyamides; polycarbonate; copolymers of polycarbonate; polybutylene terephthalate (PBT); polypropylene terephthalate (PPT); polyphenylene ether (PPE); and blends thereof.

17.   (currently amended): A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 13, wherein said semi-compacted thickness ~~sheath~~ has a maximum thickness of from about 5mm to about 50 mm.

18.   (original) A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 17, wherein said sheath has a density of from about 500 grams/m^2 to about 3000 grams/m^2.

19.   (original) A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 18, wherein said sheath has a generally U - or V- shape and is adapted to be positioned between the pillar and the trim panel.

20.   (original) A trim panel/sheath combination as set forth in claim 13, wherein the composite material comprises mineral fibers in an amount from about 10% to about 90% by weight, based on the total weight of the composite material, and organic fibers in an amount from 10% to about 90% by weight, based on the total weight of the composite material.

21.   (original) A trim panel/sheath combinations as set forth in claim 13, wherein said trim panel has a density of from about 0.5 grams/cm^3 to about a 1.5 grams/cm^3.

22.   (new): A trim panel/sheath combination adapted to be secured to a vehicle pillar comprising:

a polymeric trim panel; and

a sheath formed of composite material comprising a mixture of mineral fibers and organic fibers, said combination having an HICd value of less than about 1000.